

# The Commoner.

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## Queen Victoria.

England's queen has closed her long and eventful career and her death has brought sincere sorrow to her subjects.

Her administration was popular because her personal virtues were worthy of admiration, and for the further reason that she allowed her people (those who have parliaments), to have their own way in matters of legislation. Her birth, her education, her environment and her own interests all led her to support the monarchical principle of government, but, measured by any rule that can be applied to a throne, her reign will compare favorably with any previous reign in English history or with the reign of any contemporaneous sovereign. Her influence tended toward peace, and there is every reason to believe that war was always a source of real regret to her.

Her age, her high character and her womanliness combined to make her name revered among her own people and respected abroad. Lacking, for the most part, the qualities of head and heart which make kings odious, she has done much to lessen the opposition to arbitrary power which sixty years ago menaced European rulers. Whether her successor will profit by her example or develop less popular traits remains to be seen. If Edward VII proves that he has a just claim to the confidence bestowed upon her, she, as his mother as well as his predecessor, will derive credit from his good deeds; if, on the other hand, he fails in the difficult task of filling her place satisfactorily her reign will grow the brighter by contrast.

It is a high yet a deserved tribute to her to say that no one exercising royal prerogatives could have done better and that the world at large has cause to mourn her demise.

## The Richest Prince.

Mr. Jefferson said that the best government was that in which the people were governed the least. Sumptuary laws are not agreeable to the people, and history shows that the best citizenship in peace and the best soldiery in war are obtained where men feel that they are part of the government and where men love its institutions because of their practical value.

A contented people is always a patriotic people. Apart from the correctness of the principle, "consent of the governed" is of intensely practical advantage to the state wherein that principle prevails. It promotes contentment among the people, and consequently adds to the strength of the government. The government whose strength comes from the power of love must be mightier and more enduring than the government whose strength depends upon the sword. The

object of good government is to secure the greatest good to the greatest number.

So long as selfishness exists the only way by which the attainment of this object may be assured is to keep the power with the people.

If we could be certain that all kings would rule as well as "Wurtemberg's beloved monarch," of whom Kerner, the German poet, wrote so well, then we might be more willing to abandon popular government and rest our hopes for happiness upon the goodness of the crown, but the risk is too great. The ends of government—the contentment and happiness of the governed—were well described in the splendid boast of the riches possessed by the German prince. Kerner wrote of "the richest prince" in these words:

"All their wealth and vast possessions, vaunting high in choicest terms, sat the German princes feasting in the knightly Hall of Worms.

"'Mighty,' cried the Saxon ruler, 'are the wealth and power I wield; in my country's mountain gorges sparkling silver lies concealed.'

"'See my land with plenty growing' quoth the Palgrave of the Rhine, 'Bounteous harvests in the valleys, on the mountains noble wine.'

"'Spacious towns and wealthy convents,' Louis spake, Bavaria's lord, 'make my land to yield me treasures great as those your fields afford.'

"Wurtemberg's beloved monarch, Eberard the Bearded cried: 'See my land hath little cities; among my hills no metals bide; yet one treasure it hath borne me! Sleeping in the woodland free, I may lay my head in safety on my lowliest vassal's knee.'

"Then, as with a single utterance, cried aloud those princes three: 'Bearded Count, thy land hath jewels! Thou art wealthier far than we.'"

## Secret Influence.

The people have nothing to fear from open enemies. The man who boldly proclaims a principle, no matter what it may be, can do but little injury. No amount of intellect, learning or eloquence can make him dangerous. As Jefferson has expressed it, "Error of opinion may be tolerated where reason is left free to combat it." Truth grows in the open field; the sunshine nourishes and strengthens it. It is secret influence which is constantly corrupting government and securing special privileges for the few at the expense of the many. The man who advocates a thing which he believes to be good for the people as a whole has no reason to conceal his purpose, but the man who tries to secure an advantage which he knows to be beneficial to some class or combination but hurtful to the public naturally and necessarily employs stealth.

Would the directors of a railroad company adopt and publish a resolution designating their favorite candidate for the legislature, congress, the senate or the bench? Would they candidly set forth why they wanted him and what they expected of him after they got him? And yet it is well known that railroads often take an active part in the selection of public officials.

Would the directors of a trust adopt and

publish a resolution naming the presidential candidate they would support and announcing the contribution they would make to the campaign fund? And yet it is certain that the trusts have in the past interested themselves in campaigns.

Eternal vigilance is the price of protection against bad laws and misrule as well as the price of liberty. Since laws are made, construed and enforced by public officials, it is necessary that great care should be exercised in the selection of them in order that they, when selected, shall guard the interests of the whole people and not be the mere agents of some corporation.

## Lese-Majeste.

In the early days of Rome, there was a law specifying the crimes of Lese-Majeste. The punishment was death. Augustus was the first to extend the list of offenses that were "Lese-Majeste," and under his successors further extensions were made. If the relative of a subject was executed, the subject must exhibit delight else he would be held accountable under this law. One suspected of a sentiment not in harmony with the throne must be particular as to the expression of his eye; even a sigh might be the undoing of a compassionate person.

Recently we have heard of "Lese-Majeste" in the United States of America. Men who have dared criticize a republican administration have been subjected to suspicion under this "law." Men who have protested against a policy of imperialism, who have objected to a violation of the Constitution, who have insisted that the chief magistrate does not represent the legislative and the judicial as well as the executive branch of the Government, men who have refused to applaud every act of administration agents, have been branded as traitors by the administration press, and pointed out as disloyal by the administration orators.

Fortunately, however, the administration press and the administration orators have not framed the law of treason in this republic. The Constitution, framed by the men who founded the republic, provides that treason shall consist only in levying war against the United States or in adhering to their enemies, giving them aid and comfort.

It is as much the duty of a good citizen to protest when his country is about to engage upon a policy of wrong as it is for him to take up arms in defending his country from an army of invasion.

Edmund Burke, Pitt, and other Englishmen of their time, were regarded in the light of traitors by some, and yet today no names occupy higher places in the world's history than the names of those Englishmen who dared protest against wrong and speak in behalf of truth when the American colonists were struggling for the principles of government by the consent of the governed.

No man protested more bitterly against the